

# News Release



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.  
Release Number: 07-679-NAT

For Immediate Release  
May 8, 2007  
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## **Labor Department's MSHA to enhance Mine Emergency Operations capabilities** *Two new positions aimed at improving agency effectiveness during mine emergencies*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has announced the creation of two high-level positions within its Mine Emergency Operations division. These new job assignments, which require considerable technical and scientific expertise in mine emergency response activities, will be based at MSHA's Safety and Health Technology Center in Bruceton, Pa.

"Past experience has demonstrated that a well-run mine emergency operation depends not only on the leadership role taken by MSHA but on the knowledge and support provided by its technical experts," said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "Since Sago, we've learned a great deal about how to improve our operational procedures during a mine disaster. The filling of these two positions will go a long way toward enhancing MSHA's mine emergency response capabilities and will further ensure the safety and health of our nation's miners."

MSHA's new mine emergency operations manager will be responsible for planning and directing mine emergency preparedness, serve as the technical authority and logistical expert during all MSHA mine emergency responses, and provide guidance during subsequent accident investigations. This individual will coordinate MSHA's on-site activities, including mine atmospheric analyses and deployment of mine rescue and recovery personnel; arrange for special transportation needs to assist the districts in mine emergencies; evaluate and test new systems, equipment and response techniques to further enhance emergency preparedness; communicate ongoing activities at the disaster site to MSHA headquarters staff; respond to Congressional inquiries on mine emergency activities and actions taken at the disaster site; and provide expert testimony at court hearings and proceedings.

The new emergency rescue and recovery scientific development manager will serve as the scientific expert and technical authority on MSHA mine emergency rescue and recovery operations, overseeing new technological and scientific developments such as respirators, self-contained self-rescuers, robotics, breathable air, rescue/refuge chambers, safe havens, and communications and tracking devices. This individual will be responsible for research and development of associated regulations, policies and procedures applicable to mine emergency rescue and recovery operations, including state-of-the-art technology, improved processes in responding to mine emergencies, and more efficient rescue and recovery operations. He or she also will serve as the primary liaison between MSHA and other government agencies, including the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, along with state and local governments, scientific and engineering groups, academia and professional mining organizations.

The positions will be directly situated within MSHA's Directorate of Technical Support, which is responsible for all MSHA mine emergency operations activities. During a mine emergency, the district manager will continue to be the key decision-maker on site for enforcement.

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